



**“Young lawyers in this state volunteer,
not due to requirement, but by choice.”**

Young Lawyers

BY MATTHEW DIGESTI, ESQ., YOUNG LAWYERS SECTION CHAIR

PRO BONO – NOT BECAUSE WE HAVE TO, BUT BECAUSE WE WANT TO

Each year, the Young Lawyers Executive Committee sits down at its annual strategy meeting to discuss volunteer activities. Not once have I heard a discussion about meeting pro bono hours, reporting to the state bar or even what awards might come from participation in pro bono work. Young lawyers in this state volunteer, not due to requirement, but by choice. They recognize that with the privilege of practicing law comes a certain responsibility to their community. So, for those young lawyers looking for ways to give back, here are several initiatives to consider.

PROJECT SALUTE (Veterans Benefits)

Project Salute is a nation-wide program dedicated to educating veterans on benefits available to them. In addition to educating veterans on benefits, volunteers assist veterans in the completion of forms required to obtain those benefits. YLS administers this event annually in both northern and southern Nevada. Project Salute is an excellent way to serve those Americans who have served our country.

SERVING SENIORS (Estate Planning)

Serving Seniors began as an ABA-Young Lawyers Division public service project. YLS administers this program throughout the state in an effort to educate seniors about estate planning options. Serving Seniors is an excellent forum through which to enhance your estate planning skills while simultaneously assisting the senior citizens in your community.

LOCAL LEGAL AID CENTERS (Pro Bono Legal Services)

Our state has exceptional legal aid centers that assist qualified residents with legal issues such as landlord-tenant law, consumer protection, domestic violence and immigration issues. Washoe Legal Services in Washoe County and Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada in Clark County are indispensable resources for residents in need. The number of residents who cannot afford legal services, yet have immediate legal needs, continues to rise. Performing pro bono services through these organizations is a chance to literally change the lives of those who cannot afford your services, which is extra rewarding. You truly have a real life, and real world, impact on clients.

WASHOE COUNTY – LAWYER IN THE LIBRARY (Free Consultations)

The Washoe County Law Library offers residents free consultations with local lawyers, through its Lawyer in the Library Program. Residents with legal questions attend the program and are paired with a lawyer for five to 10 minutes. They ask legal questions concerning issues ranging from defending traffic citations to how to respond to a civil complaint. The program has a long and successful track record of providing high-level advice to those who cannot afford legal consultations.

YOUNG LAWYERS DEDICATED TO SERVING THEIR COMMUNITY

Having served on the YLS Executive Committee for some time, I am exposed to those lawyers in our state who are particularly dedicated to serving their respective communities. While I have come across many individuals who donate their time, I would like to highlight two colleagues in particular.

Richard Williamson of Robertson, Johnson, Miller & Williamson practices in Washoe County. Having been an active and keystone participant for the past six years, Richard has consulted with residents who were unaware of the resources available to them in the areas of child custody, divorce and civil proceedings. In some cases, he has even helped residents avoid default judgments by explaining the necessary steps to timely respond to a complaint. The program has been highly rewarding for him because he has been able to ease the burden of those individuals faced with legal questions they cannot answer.

Shane Young of Ballard Spahr LLP practices in Clark County. Having a special affinity for children, Shane has

worked closely with Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada to take on pro bono cases. She has assisted in difficult, emotionally-charged family law cases, by representing abused and neglected children through the Children's Attorney Project. Shane finds that advocating on behalf of children is very fulfilling both professionally and personally, because she assists children in helping to close very traumatic chapters in their lives.

Richard and Shane are two of many young lawyers in this state providing pro bono services out of a sense of both responsibility and professionalism. When I speak with young lawyers who provide pro bono services, I find that they share stories concerning their pro bono experiences before they share stories about their jobs. Pro bono services have a way of rounding out a practice, of connecting us to our community and of providing a feeling of professional fulfillment.

If you would like additional information about the pro bono activities administered by the Young Lawyers Section, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at MDIGESTI@FCLAW.com. ■